

It has been well established that the Amateur Radio Service provides tremendous benefit during emergencies by providing backup and cross-agency communications during times of need.

BPL is a flawed and poor way to provide broadband Internet coverage to areas that could be serviced by other means. Its only redeeming feature is that it is cheap in terms of infrastructure investment. But there are hidden costs to taking the cheap implementation.

BPL is deployed over power lines that do nothing to shield against RF radiation. The frequencies planned can radiate for long distances even at low power levels. Current users of most services in the Medium Frequency, High Frequency, and Very High Frequency spectrum would be adversely affected by this cheap system.

Acceptable communication links are often defined by Signal to Noise Ratio. BPL increases the noise over a broad spectrum by using a wide range of frequencies that are available to licensed users. BPL has no provision to shield these licensed users from the broadband interference noise generated. This has a bad effect all around.

The Amateur Radio Service is required to use the minimum power necessary to maintain communications, but if the noise level is generally increased on all HF bands, the only alternative left is to increase the transmitted power. This leads to further problems in that low power stations may not be heard at all, more potential interference to part 15 devices is likely with higher power levels, and there is a further effect of the high power levels also adding to the noise levels in the environment.

As an Amateur Radio operator for over 25 years, I have seen the poor state of some powerlines. Even those lines that are only intended to provide power often have degraded insulators and can radiate broadband noise for great distances. BPL only adds to this interference potential.

There are better technical alternatives to BPL such as fiber, Wireless Internet Providers and satellites that provide the benefits of broadband communications capabilities without the harmful interference potential. All of these alternative technologies have been successfully deployed today and are economically viable.